

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL OPORTO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 843

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L OPORTO 168

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: ELECTION REFLECTIONS IN THE NORTH

REF: OPORTO 160 DTG 201745Z APR 76

SUMMARY: FIRST COMMENTS BY NORTHERNERS IN REACTION TO
ELECTION FOCUSED ON CDS GAINS, PS HOLDING POWER AND
PPD LOSSES AMIDST FEARS OF CONTINUING CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
INSTABILITY. END SUMMARY.

1. POPULAR DEMOCRATS SUFFER SIGNIFICANT LOSS: LOCAL PPD
RANK AND FILE ARE DESPONDENT OVER POOR PARTY SHOWING WITH
VOTING LOSSES IN ALL NINE NORTHERN DISTRICTS (OPORTO CONSULAR
DISTRICT) RANGING FROM 10-30 PERCENT. PPD CAMPAIGN HAD
NOTICEABLY LOST MOMENTUM DURING FINAL WEEKS (REFTEL, PARA
2). EXTENT OF DROP-OFF IN VOTING STRENGTH IS CONSIDERED
HERE TO BE VERY SERIOUS AND POSSIBLE HARBINGER OF PARTY'S
ULTIMATE DEMISE AS SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL FORCE ON PAR WITH
PS OR CDS. PPD LOSSES ARE VIEWED AS PERSONAL REFUTATION
OF SA CARNEIRO LEADERSHIP. SA CARNEIRO FAMILY SOURCES DESCRIBE
PPD SEC GEN AS TOTALLY DEPRESSED. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL
SOURCES, PPD FUTURE DEPENDS ON CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP POLICIES
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SUCH AS ONE-MAN PARTY RULE AS WELL AS EVENTUAL PS DIRECTION.

2. IMPRESSIVE CDS GAINS: CDS SCORED IMPRESSIVE GAINS IN EVERY NORTHERN DISTRICT WITH LARGEST VOTE INCREASES PREDICTABLY OCCURRING IN RURAL INTERIOR AREAS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, CDS LEADS IN ONE DISTRICT (GUARDA) AND CAME CLOSE TO CAPTURING TWO MORE (VISBU AND BRAGANCA). PPD LOSSES WERE CDS GAINS. LOCAL PARTY CONTACTS ARE SLIGHTLY DISAPPOINTED OVER COUNTRY-WIDE RESULTS BUT PLEASED WITH NORTHERN RETURNS. PREVALENT ATTITUDE IS "WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR". CDS PRESIDENT FREITAS DO AMARAL RECEIVES HIGH PRAISE FOR CAMPAIGN RESULTS. IN CONTRAST, POSSIBLE PRESIDENTIAL CONTENDER GALVAO DE MELO IS RARELY MENTIONED.

3. SOCIALIST MORAL VICTORY: PS LOST A FEW VOTES IN ALL NORTHERN DISTRICTS BUT BRAGA. HOWEVER, DROP-OFF IN NO WAY CORRESPONDS TO SERIOUS PPD LOSSES. OVERALL RESULTS SHOW PS AHEAD OF PPD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE NORTH IN BOTH VOTES (813,000 VS 723,000) AND DEPUTIES (45 VS 41). THIS IS CONSIDERED GREAT MORAL VICTORY. PS MAINTAINED LEADING PARTY POSITION IN OPORTO AND COIMBRA AND GAINED BRAGA DESPITE LAST MINUTE APPEALS APPEARING IN LOCAL CHURCH PRESS URGING CATHOLICS NOT TO VOTE COMMUNIST OR MARXIST (READ PS).

4. TOTAL COMMUNIST AND ULTRA LEFT DROP-OFF COMMUNISTS (PCP) SCORED SLIGHT INCREASES IN SEVERAL URBAN DISTRICTS AND PICKED UP ONE DEPUTY IN OPORTO FOR TOTAL OF 3 PLUS ONE IN COIMBRA. PCP VOTE RANGED FROM 2 PERCENT IN VISBU TO 8 PERCENT IN OPORTO. HOWEVER, TOTAL PCP AND ULTRA-LEFT VOTE IN THE NORTH DROPPED ON AVERAGE OF 20 PERCENT IN EVERY DISTRICT IN COMPARISON TO 1975 ELECTION RESULTS WHICH INCLUDED FELLOW-TRAVELING DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (MDP/CDE). THE TREND IS TOWARD COMMUNISTS BECOMING A REGIONAL RATHER THAN NATIONAL FORCE.

5. CONCLUSIONS: INITIAL IMPRESSIONS SUGGEST THAT NORTHERN ELECTORATE MADE PERCEPTIBLE SWING TO RIGHT WITHOUT ABANDONING PS. NORTHERNERS SHOWED NO INCLINATION TO SUPPORT SPLINTER GROUPS OR RIGHT WING PARTIES. CONSERVATIVE INTERIOR VOTE PARTICIPATION WAS GENERALLY BELOW NATIONAL AVERAGE. AGAINST BACKGROUND OF EARLIER BOMBINGS AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE NORTH, TOTAL LACK OF SUCH INCIDENTS DURING ELECTION PROVIDES

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REMARKABLE ILLUSTRATION OF PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT. ABSENCE OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE MAY, HOWEVER, ONLY PROVE TEMPORARY. SEVERAL LOCAL COMMENTATORS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT ELECTION FURTHER REINFORCES INTERNAL POLARIZATION BETWEEN ANTI-COMMUNIST NORTH VS SOUTHERN "RED" BELT. MOST IMMEDIATE FEAR HERE IS THAT MINORITY PS GOVERNMENT WILL NOT HAVE NECESSARY FORCE TO ENACT AND ENFORCE TOUGH PROGRAM OF ECONOMIC AUSTERITY. OPORTO COMMUNISTS AND ULTRA-LEFT ARE ALREADY HARD AT WORK

PROMOTING FIRST POST-ELECTION RALLY ON MAY 1ST LABOR DAY
TO PROTEST, INTER ALIA, HIGH COST OF LIVING, UNEMPLOYMENT
AND "CAPITALIST ADVANCES", AND TO PROMOTE "LABOR UNITY".

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